News release

15 May 2007

Met Office joins forces with Australians to improve weather and climate predictions

In a world where impacts of climate change and severe weather are of vital concern, Met Office Chief Executive, Mark Hutchinson and Dr Geoff Love, Director of the Australian Bureau of Meteorology have signed a partnership agreement combining the science expertise of both forecast centres, with the ultimate aim of improving weather forecasts and climate change predictions.

In a partnership, that also includes the Australian Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation (CSIRO), the Met Office has licensed the use of its world-renowned Unified Model – the computer program that is used in climate and weather prediction.

The Met Office model is the model of choice for the Australian Community Climate Earth-System Simulator (ACCESS), which is a joint collaboration between the Australian Bureau of Meteorology and CSIRO. It is expected that improved and better-understood climate predictions from the Earth-System simulator will contribute to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) Fifth Assessment Report in 2012.

As the world faces climate change and its impacts, international collaborations are an essential strategy. National issues, such as severe weather events, can only be truly understood within the global context of climate change.

Met Office Chief Executive Mark Hutchinson said: "This exciting collaboration will undoubtedly improve the science of weather forecasting and climate prediction. It is a reflection of both the scientific excellence of the Met Office model and our desire to collaborate internationally in its further development as the pre-eminent weather and climate modelling tool in the world."

Underpinning the licence agreement is a joint science research plan that will lead to better regional climate-change predictions and more-accurate day-to-day weather forecasts, improving environmental advice to governments, industry, businesses and individuals.

The collaborative research programme will initially focus on these priorities.

- Assess and improve the model's southern hemisphere performance, particularly in the tropical, Australian and Antarctic regions.
- Improve regional climate modelling – essential to help governments understand climate change impacts.
- Improve forecasting of tropical cyclones.
- Improve the use of satellite data in the starting analyses that underpin the model forecast.

Speaking at the 15th Congress of the World Meteorological Organization in Geneva, Dr Geoff Love said: "This represents an exciting new chapter of Australia's participation in developing new and better weather forecasts and climate prediction models".

The Met Office Unified Model already drives weather forecasts on supercomputer platforms with partners South African Weather Service and the Norwegian Meteorological Institute. Talks are under way between the Met Office and several other nations with regard to them entering similar collaborative agreements.

Notes:

- The Met Office is the UK's national weather service, providing world-renowned scientific excellence in weather and climate change.
- The Met Office Unified Model is a coupled atmospheric and oceanic General Circulation Model used in both numerical weather prediction (weather forecasting) and climate change research/prediction.
- The Australian Bureau of Meteorology is the national meteorological service of Australia.
- CSIRO is the Australian Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation. It is Australia's national science agency and one of the largest and most diverse research agencies in the world.
- Australian Community Climate Earth-System Simulator (ACCESS) is a coupled climate and earth system simulator being jointly developed by Australian Bureau of Meteorology and CSIRO in co-operation with the Australian university community.

For further information:
Met Office Press Office +44 (0)1392 886655
E-mail: pressoffice@metoffice.gov.uk

Met Office Customer Centre 0870 900 0100
If you're outside the UK +44 (0)1392 885680

©Crown copyright www.metoffice.gov.uk